

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 TRSE-00 IO-13 SAM-01 SAJ-01 /081 W

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R 101652Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1739

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15238

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: WEST GERMAN BUNDESTAG ELECTION: THREE  
WEEKS TO GO

REF: BONN 14675

BEGIN SUMMARY: WEST GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS REMAIN  
INCONCLUSIVE. THE UNDECIDED VOTE REMAINS AT TEN TO  
FIFTEEN PERCENT, AND THE GAP BETWEEN THE COALITION AND  
THE OPPOSITION IS SO SMALL THAT IT COULD BE REVERSED  
GIVEN THE MARGIN OF ERROR. AT THIS POINT IN THE CAM-  
PAIGN THE CDU/CSU CAMPAIGN HAS THE MOST MOMENTUM.  
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CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE KOHL IS A MUCH IMPROVED CAMPAIGNER

AND IS DRAWING LARGE CROWDS THROUGHOUT THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC (E.G., HE AND STRAUSS DREW 16,000 IN THE SPD STRONGHOLD OF DORTMUND). CDU SECRETARY-GENERAL BIEDENKOPF, WHO HEADS THE CDU TICKET IN THE KEY STATE OF NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA, IS CONFRONTING TRADE UNIONS IN THE RUHR, ACCUSING THEM OF CRONYISM AND OF ABUSING THEIR POWER. ALTHOUGH CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AND SPD CHAIRMAN BRANDT ARE CAMPAIGNING VERY ACTIVELY, THE SPD HAS NOT MOBILIZED ITS MEMBERS FULLY. FDP CHAIRMAN GENSCHER HAS BEGUN TO CAMPAIGN SERIOUSLY, BUT THE LIBERALS ARE STILL FACING AN UPHILL FIGHT. WITH APPROXIMATELY THREE WEEKS TO GO IN THE WEST GERMAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN THE OUTCOME STILL IS A CLIFF-HANGER. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THIS POINT IN THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION CAMPAIGN THE INITIATIVE REMAINS WITH THE CDU/CSU. THE UNION PARTIES DETERMINE THE SUBJECTS TO BE DEBATED, AND THEY HAVE FORCED THE COALITION PARTIES ON THE DEFENSIVE. THE GENERAL TONE OF THE CAMPAIGN HAS BECOME SHARPER. SCHMIDT NOW ATTACKS KOHL DIRECTLY, AND KOHL TELLS HIS LISTENERS THAT THIS IS PROOF THAT THE SPD IS IN A STATE OF PANIC. CERTAINLY SCHMIDT DID UNDERESTIMATE KOHL AS AN OPPONENT AND HAS ONLY BELATEDLY COME TO REALIZE THAT THE MAINZER HAS WIDE-SCALE POPULARITY.

2. IN CRITICAL NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA (29 PERCENT OF THE GERMAN VOTERS LIVE IN NRW), CDU SECRETARY-GENERAL KURT BIEDENKOPF HAS TAKEN A BOLD AND RISKY STROKE BY ACCUSING TRADE UNIONS OF CRONYISM AND MISUSE OF POWER. HE HAS PUBLICLY DISCLOSED A NUMBER OF DOCUMENTED EXAMPLES AND CALLED UPON THE GERMAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (DGB) TO INVESTIGATE THE CHARGES. THE DGB REJECTED THE CHARGES AND THE UNIONS ARE ACCUSING BIEDENKOPF OF BEING ANTI-WORKER AS WELL AS ANTI-UNION.

3. WHEN AN EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED BIEDENKOPF IF HE WERE NOT TAKING A CONSIDERABLE RISK, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL REPLIED "ABSOLUTELY NOT." OVERNIGHT, HE SAID, HIS ATTACK ON TRADE UNION ABUSES HAD MADE HIM A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN THE CAMPAIGN AND THE CDU WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE

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WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION AMONG WORKERS IN THE RUHR. ONE CDU POLITICIAN POINTED OUT THAT THE BIEDENKOPF STRATEGY IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT HE CAN NOT OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN NRW EVEN IF HE TRIED TO OUTFLANK THE SPD IN COURTING THE LABOR VOTE. THEREFORE, BY TAKING THE RISK AND ATTACKING THE UNIONS, HE HOPES TO PICK UP THE VOTES OF THE DISSATISFIED UNION MEMBERS AND THUS ADD TO THE CDU TOTAL. IN 1972 THE CDU RECEIVED

FORTY-ONE PERCENT IN NRW.

4. HELMUT SCHMIDT IS FULLY ENGAGED IN THE CAMPAIGN NOW BUT HIS STAFF ADMITS THAT PARTY WORKERS ARE STILL NOT COMPLETELY MOBILIZED. SCHMIDT APPEARED THIS WEEK ON THE TELEVISION PROGRAM "VOTERS QUESTION: POLITICIANS ANSWER" AND HANDLED HIMSELF EXTREMELY WELL. HE FACED A CRITICAL GROUP OF QUESTIONERS WHO WE HAVE LEARNED WERE BRIEFED BY CDU NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS BEFOREHAND.

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5. HELMUT SCHMIDT'S PERSONAL ATTACKS ON KOHL ARE PARTLY THE RESULT OF THE FRUSTRATION THE CHANCELLOR FEELS IN NOT BEING ABLE TO FACE KOHL IN A MAN-TO-MAN DEBATE. HE IS CONVINCED THAT HE COULD DEMONSTRATE FULLY HIS INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL SUPERIORITY IN SUCH A CONFRONTATION. SOME OF HIS PR ADVISORS, HOWEVER, FEEL THAT THE CHANCELLOR MIGHT LOSE HIS TEMPER DURING THE DEBATE WHICH WOULD REDOUND TO KOHL'S FAVOR. IN ANY EVENT, SCHMIDT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF WHAT SUCH A SERIES OF DEBATES WOULD DO TO THE FORTUNES OF  
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THE FDP.

6. WHILE NO MAJOR ISSUES OR THEMES HAVE YET EVOLVED, SOME ISSUES BUBBLE BELOW THE SURFACE ACCORDING TO CDU DEPUTY RICHARD VON WEIZSAECKER. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH VOTERS HE FOUND THAT MANY GERMANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FUTURE SCHOOL AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR CHILDREN, CHANGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM WHICH THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND, AND THE SOLVENCY OF THE FRG PENSION SYSTEM. THESE CONCERNS, HE BELIEVES, MAKE THESE PEOPLE POTENTIAL CDU VOTERS ON OCTOBER 3. WEIZSAECKER, WHO HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED A CLEAR-EYED VIEW OF HIS PARTY'S CHANCES, IS NOW MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT A UNION VICTORY THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST. KOHL IS ALSO EBULIENT. HE TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER RECENTLY THAT NOT ONLY THE STRONG SHOWING THE CDU/CSU WAS MAKING IN THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS BUT THE VERY MOOD OF THE VOTERS HAS CONVINCED HIM THAT THE CDU/CSU WILL WIN.

7. THE FDP CAMPAIGN IS NOW UNDERWAY, AND IF PAST EXPERIENCE IS ANY GUIDE, THE LIBERALS ARE LIKELY TO DO BETTER THAN MANY POLLS NOW INDICATE. ONLY TOWARDS THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN DO MANY GERMAN VOTERS BECOME AWARE OF THE FLEXIBILITY THAT THEIR SECOND BALLOT GIVES THEM. IN ADDITION, THE PERCENTAGE OF FDP VOTERS IS SO SMALL THAT POLLS WITH A TWO PERCENT ERROR MARGIN DO NOT REFLECT ACCURATELY THE FINAL VOTE. THE LIBERALS ARE HOPING THAT THE PUBLICITY GENSCHER WILL GET AT THE UNGA SESSION WILL HELP ON ELECTION DAY.

8. THE SIZE OF THE CROWDS CANDIDATES DRAW IS AN UNDEPENDABLE BAROMETER FOR THE OUTCOME OF AN ELECTION, BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE CDU/CSU HAS, AT LEAST UP UNTIL NOW, RUN A MORE AGGRESSIVE AND MORE EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, IT IS MUCH TOO SOON TO CONCEDE THE ELECTION TO ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. RECENT CONCILIATORY STATEMENTS AND GESTURES BY THE SOVIETS AND EAST GERMANS COULD HELP

THE GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE. THE NEXT THREE WEEKS WILL  
BE DEVOTED TOWARDS SWINGING THE UNDECIDED VOTE WHICH  
WILL BE THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE OUTCOME  
ON OCTOBER 3.  
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HILLENBRAND

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